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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed for use by instructors and tutors at the M. L. Sultan Technikon (South Africa) for teaching students of English as a Second Language or students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. It provides assistance in teaching academic language and study skills in the context of course content. The underlying philosophy is that the focus should be on developing the full academic/cognitive potential of each student and that the instructor must learn to serve the multilingual/multicultural student population. The guide is designed to be used in two semesters. An introductory section offers suggestions for engaging students in all language skill areas through brainstorming, guided discussion, interviews, role-playing, and notetaking. The plan for the first semester outlines a week-by-week scheme for developing the four language skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) one at a time through specific tasks. Each task is separated into several stages. The plan for the second semester outlines tasks that are progressively more difficult and reflect real academic requirements. A brief bibliography is included. (MSE)

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LANGUAGE/LEARNING SKILLS

CONTENT BASED COURSE :

TUTOR GUIDE

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CONTENT

	PAGE
1. PREFACE	1
2. INTRODUCTION	2-4
3. EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT : MODEL FOR THE 1990s	5-6
4. USING ALL LANGUAGE SKILLS	7-10
5. TERM ONE	12-19
6. TERM TWO	20
7. READING SKILLS	21
8. WRITING SKILLS	33

PREFACE

Information has been gathered from several acknowledged sources. Source material has been adapted for use in the lecture room.

This Tutor Guide is designed to provide the lecturer/tutor with alternate teaching strategies for the multilingual classroom.

Ideas and options are merely suggested to assist lecturers/tutors modify their course content and adapt their teaching style.

Suggestions, for the improvement of the Tutor Handbook, made by Mr G Wilcox, English Regional Representative, Pretoria and other colleagues are acknowledged with thanks.

2. INTRODUCTION

Student Development at the M L Sultan Technikon was established in November 1990 in response to the need to provide academic support for all students. SAPSE, the state funding formula is not applicable to academic support. Funds, therefore, have to be sought from the private sector or other sources.

2.1 Tutor Guide

This Tutor Guide is designed to assist the tutor whether he/she is the course lecturer or not. With the aid of this guide the tutor can teach students language skills which will enable them to cope with their academic schedule.

The tasks presented in this guide can be applied across the curriculum whatever the course content.

The tasks must at all times be course-related. The tutor may use his/her discretion in selecting appropriate language material with the objective of teaching the skill.

2.2 Assessing Student Needs

The lecturer will be responsible for assessing student need for further academic support (ie. specifically Language Skills) at the beginning of each semester.

This assessment should preferably be done between the first two to four weeks when the students have attended a fair number of lectures in the course. One should not wait until the first test or assignment scheduled on the course in order to make this assessment.

A task must be set based on the work covered and the standard of responses to the task must be in keeping with departmental requirements for tests, assignments and examinations in the mainstream course.

The assessment of student performance must again be made along departmental lines. Once a number of students have been selected for further academic support those students must be compelled to attend an extra tutorial. Alternatively, the lecturer can incorporate the Learning/Language Skills course in the existing content-based tutorial periods.

2.3 Monitoring Student Progress

Tutors should immediately draw up a Record Card for the selected students. This card should record student performance scores in mainstream test, assignment and examination activities as well as in any such activities set in the Learning/Language Skills course. This will enable the tutor to monitor student progress at a glance and to determine student weakness and/or strength.

2.4 Tutorial Tasks and Content-Related Material

All tutorial tasks are designed so that tutors in all departments can follow the tasks through in a simple, organized manner. Depending on the Faculty/department course, each tutor is urged to use **COURSE - RELATED** material in each tutorial. Course-related material means that the exercises, visuals, script etc. must be relevant to the course the student is registered for. Course textbooks, or course-related journals and articles can be used. Each task must stimulate the student's thinking with regard to his chosen career and future work environment. The ultimate objective is to make him technically literate i.e. to relate to his immediate environment and to enable him to identify with his career goals and finally to prepare him for his work environment.

2.5 Conclusion

Tutors are welcome to discuss or comment on the Tutor Guide and to make suggestions for improvement.

3. EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT : MODEL FOR THE 90's

3.1 Educational Development : the Concept

Educational Development is introduced as the 1990's alternative to the academic support/bridging debate of the 80's.

Academic support/bridging in the 80's was directed at assisting 'disadvantaged' (Black) students with language and academic skills. It became the only option open to tertiary institutions to address and to "put right" the inequalities present in the primary and secondary education systems of the past fifty odd years. Many educationists and non-educationists viewed the academic support (ASP)/bridging initiatives suspiciously.

Today, the focus has shifted towards a more open, non-racial alternative : educational development. Educational Development aims at developing the full academic/cognitive potential of all students at tertiary institutions. It has a wider agenda; it concentrates on the academic, cognitive and language skills of the student and it surpasses the issue of colour.

3.2 The 'disadvantaged' Lecturer

For the past decade the term 'disadvantaged' has been widely used to describe the Black student who comes from the townships, the homelands and from within South Africa.

Disadvantaged students come from education systems which are substandard; where English is taught as a second language and where they are taught by unqualified teachers. This is the reality of the education scenario to date.

In the 1990's yet another reality has come to the fore, the plight of the 'disadvantaged' lecturer. The 'disadvantaged' lecturer comes from a more adequate education system, was taught English as a first language and was fortunate in being taught by qualified, specialist teachers.

The disadvantaged lecturer is now faced with the multilingual/multicultural classroom. He is at a disadvantage in a sense that he fails to understand the cultural/contextual implications of his teaching.

The 'disadvantaged' lecturer has to make special effort to adapt his teaching style and to modify teaching content. This tutor guide is designed to assist the 'disadvantaged' lecturer.

USING ALL LANGUAGE SKILLS

If one carefully examines any communicative activity one is involved in one will realize that two or more language skills are used in the communicative activity. The type of language skill used will be determined by the nature of the communication, the duration of the communication and the ability of the recipient to respond meaningfully to the communication.

In the lecture room, for example, the lecturer SPEAKS! this means that the students are engaged in LISTENING, then WRITING what they hear, and READING what they wrote.

Finally, they may be urged to participate by SPEAKING (by way of comments, questions or discussion).

Ann Raimes (1983 : chapter 5) suggests that in teaching/learning situations students should be encouraged to use all language skills. Some of the techniques in using all language skills suggested by her are : brainstorming, guided discussion, interviews, skits and note taking.

4.1 Brainstorming

This activity lets students work together in the classroom in small groups to say as much as they can about a topic. In this brainstorming activity students produce relevant vocabulary, make comments, ask questions and make associations as freely as they can in a short time.

Example : Give students a topic, a picture, map, personal experience, reading material

Instruct students to respond in five minutes. Students may offer comments, relevant vocabulary, questions.

4.2 Guided Discussion

To get students to talk about a topic and especially to get them to focus on specific aspects of a topic. Provide guidelines for group or whole class discussion.

Example Give specific directions or pose particular questions to allow students to direct attention to the significant points on an issue.

4.3 Interviews

This technique is useful to get students to know each other, to establish better questioning techniques and to teach students to be objective when making enquiries or responding to information.

Example Divide students into pairs and ask each to interview the other about their career interests or hobbies.

4.4 Skits or Role Play

In a skit, or role playing situation students act not as themselves but in an assigned role.

Example : Students can be asked to act out the career role they intend to play. Pictures and cartoons can be used.

4.5 Note Taking

This activity is one that nearly all students are enjoyed in. There is nearly always a need to listen and write. Students can be alerted to signals that speakers use: pauses, raising the head and/or voice to make an important point or using words like first, finally, most important.

Example : Read aloud a text about a current or course-related event. Students take notes. Students can compare notes and decide on who wrote the best notes and what makes those notes good.

These are some of the techniques which will enable students to use all the language skills. When students use the techniques frequently they will feel comfortable using the language skill in any situation.

NOTE Tutors must ensure that they use course-related reading material (textbooks, journals, articles, magazines) as this will offer maximum benefit to students.

These techniques can easily be incorporated into tutorials and/or lessons with smaller groups of students.

SEMESTER

ONE

Note : The Tutor Guide is designed specifically for each semester. The handbook for semester one can be adapted for use in semester two.

TERM ONE

12

16

Week 1 : LISTENING SKILL

TASK : LISTEN AND TAKE NOTE

Stage 1 : Introducing the Task

Choose a relevant passage from a course textbook or course related textbook. Read or explain the passage to the group and ask students to take note. Stop.

Stage 2 - Questions to ask the Group

Ask students what they noted down

Pose following questions:

What is the main idea or theme?

What have you noted down?

Did you note down all the information?

Why not?

What problem did you experience while listening and taking note?

How can you correct the problem?

Stage 3 - Prompt

Now prompt the group. Mention that they must:

- Listen first then write
- Use arrows, dashes, dittos, abbreviations
- Listen selectively ie. decide what the central idea/issue is
- Listen for information related to the central issue

Read the passage a second time and ask the group to keep the above in mind.

Stage 4 - Evaluation

Stop reading/explaining.

Ask the group to compare both sets of written notes.

Instruct the group to critically evaluate their writing.

Ask them what conclusions can be reached from the critical evaluation.

What have they learnt from the listening exercise?

Important clues to listen out for:

Be selective; be alert to related issues; to listen for important cues eg. reasons; two criteria; several ideas, symptoms; identify key issues.

Week 2 : Writing Skill

TASK : WRITE WHAT YOU THINK

Stage 1 : Introducing the Task

Choose a relevant topic from a course textbook or course related textbook.

Write the topic on the chalk board.

Ask students to write what they think (or feel) about the topic for five minutes.

Stop the exercise at the end of five minutes.

Stage 2 : Questions to ask the group

Have you written what you think or someone else's thoughts?

Have you written from personal experience or with factual knowledge.

Stage 3 : Prompt

Now prompt the group. Instruct students to exchange their paragraph with another student. Ask students to read the paragraph given to them. Students should check whether:

- the paragraph is coherent (explain the word coherent to them)

- it is an expression of personal thoughts (ie. opinion, thought or feeling of the writer)
- the writer supports his/her opinion
- the paragraph contains any factual information
- it has several different thoughts expressed
- it has a single thought/idea expressed throughout

Stage 4 : Evaluation

Ask students to critically evaluate the writing exercise.

What do they think of the writing effort?

Is it a good or a poor effort?

Ask students to be objective and fair.

Students must rate the work out of a score of ten. In assessing the writing they should keep in mind the following criteria:

- is the writing relevant to the topic?
- is the use of language simple and clear?
- are there errors of grammar?
- does the writer write in a coherent manner?
- is the writing a confused, disorganised group of sentences with no objective?
- will the reader understand the content without difficulty?

Week 3 : Reading Skill

TASK : READ AND SUMMARISE

Stage 1 : Introducing the Task

Choose at least two pages of reading material (using your discretion) from a course textbook or course related textbook. Instruct students to read for ten minutes.

Stop the students from reading in exactly ten minutes.

Ask them to write a short paragraph summarising important ideas expressed in the reading material.

Stage 2 : Questions to ask the Group

What important points are made in the article about the topic?
Is the writer presented factual information?

Stage 3 : Prompt

Group must read the passage again and to use the following technique before jotting down points:

- browse over the reading material/literature
- a quick perusal per paragraph is necessary to determine at least ONE important topic related point.

- jot down points per paragraph.
- at the end of the reading and noting exercise, decide on what overall issue the writer is discussing

Stage 4 : Evaluation

Instruct students to compare the first summary with the second and to determine how and why an improvement can be noted in the second effort.

Discussion Points:

Lastly - what opinions can the students contribute to the issue under discussion in the literature?

What is the difference between an opinion and a fact? Quote an example of each from the reading material to illustrate.

Week 4 : Speaking Skill

TASK : SPEAK WHAT YOU FEEL

Stage 1 : Introducing the task

Instruct students to select an issue/topic which they have personal opinions/attitudes about. Students to prepare a short talk to present their views to the group.

Stage 2 : Student Presentation

Group to listen carefully and to note points for discussion:

Clarity of speech?

Sequence?

Justified opinions?

Alternate views

Stage 3 : Discussion

Group responses to the presentation

Critical analysis of presentation

Stage 4 : Evaluation

Which presentation was good

Strong and weak points to be highlighted

TERM TWO

20

21

24

READING SKILLS

It is important to teach students reading techniques as they will be engaged in the activity of reading for most of their academic lives.

What are some of the reading techniques which students need to be taught in order to understand the written word and to respond to it meaningfully?

According to Francoise Grellet (1981:3) any reading activity involves comprehension and assessment of the text. Students must first be taught simple reading techniques, next how to grasp the aim of the text, thirdly to understand meaning and finally assessing the text.

Grellet (1981:12) outlines Reading comprehension exercise-types:

Reading Techniques

1. Sensitizing
 - (a) Inferencing : through the context
Inference : through word formation
 - (b) Understanding relations within the sentence
 - (c) Linking sentences and ideas : reference
Linking sentences and ideas :
link words
2. Improving reading speed
3. From skimming to scanning
 - (a) Predicting
 - (b) Previewing
 - (c) Anticipation
 - (d) Skimming
 - (e) Scanning

How the aim is conveyed

1. Aim and Function of the text
 - (a) Function of the text
 - (b) Functions within the text

2. **Organization of the text**
 Different thematic patterns
 - (a) Main idea and supporting details
 - (b) Chronological sequence
 - (c) Descriptions
 - (d) Analogy and contrast
 - (e) Clasification
 - (f) Argumentative and Logical organization
3. **Thermatization**

Understanding Meaning

1. **Non-linguistic response to the text**
 - (a) Ordering a sequence of pictures
 - (b) Comparing texts and pictures
 - (c) matching
 - (d) using illustrations
 - (e) completing a document
 - (f) Mapping it out
 - (g) Using the information in the text
 - (h) Jigsaw reading
2. **Linguistic response to the text**
 - (a) reorganizing the information:
 reordering events

reorganizing the information
using grids

- (b) comparing several texts
- (c) completing a document
- (d) question - types
- (e) Study skills : summarizing
Study skills : note taking

Assessing the Text

1. Fact versus Opinion
2. Writer's intention

Week 1 : Reading Skill

TASK : INFERENCING

Specific Aim : To train students to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Skills involved: Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items through contextual clues.

Why? : This kind of exercise will make the students realize how much the context can help them find out the meaning of difficult or unfamiliar words.

Stage 1 : Introduction

Select a short, course-related article. Instruct the group to read the article and to jot down those words and phrases which are unfamiliar. Allow five minutes for this task.

Stage 2 : Questions

Ask the group the following questions:

What are some of the words and phrases which are unfamiliar? Instructor to list student contributions quickly on the chalkboard or OHP transparency.

How will students attempt to find the meaning of these words?

Will they consult dictionaries (Oxford) or course-related dictionaries?

What will they do if these appeared in an examination or test? (There may be no time to consult a dictionary or another person).

Stage 3 : Prompt

Now prompt the group.

Hints :- look at the words again in context

- attempt a guess at the word itself
- look at the context, does it give a possible explanation of the unfamiliar word/phrase?
- is the word repeated elsewhere in the text?
- does the word have a similar or different interpretation the second time?

After you have prompted the students, ask them to read again and to guess/infer the meaning. Allow students another five minutes.

Stage 4 : Evaluation

Stop students from writing. Ask students what meaning can be inferred from the words. Compare student contributions. Allow students to discuss how they inferred the meaning. Question and ask students what they learnt from the exercise.

Week 2 : Reading Skill

TASK : PREVIEWING

Specific Aim : To train students to use titles and tables of content to get an idea of what the passage is about.

Skills involved: Reference skill
Anticipation
Scanning

Why? : This exercise is one of many that can be used to show students how much they can guess about a passage by simply looking at its title and at the table of contents.

Stage 1 : Introduction

Select appropriate content related material from a course textbook. One printed page is sufficient. Photocopy the page, make sufficient copies for the class (at least one copy per 2 or 3 students). Instruct students to read the title on the page.

Stage 2 : Question

Engage students in a brainstorming activity. Before they are instructed to read the page, ask them what they think the passage is about?

Think of at least three possibilities.

Stage 3 : Prompt

On an OHP transparency write the title of the book the material was selected from and the table of contents of the book. Instruct students to examine and discuss the title of the article, title of the book and table of contents carefully.

Stage 4 : Evaluation

Ask students to make a more accurate guess at the contents of the passage. Does this lead them to reconsider their former opinion and guess at the content of the passages? What have they learnt?

Week 3 : Reading Skill

TASK : SKIMMING

Specific Aim : To prepare students to skim by asking them to recognise the key sentences of a passage.

Skills involved: Identifying the main point or important information.
Distinguishing the main idea from support details.

Why? : Training the students to recognise the key sentences of a text is an essential preparation to skimming since it will show them that:

- (a) one sentence usually sums up the gist of each paragraph and
- (b) this key sentence often appears at the beginning of each paragraph.

Stage 1 : Introduction

Select a course-related passage. Instruct students to skim through it (ie. not to read every sentence, to run their eyes through the text and to identify key words or expressions as clues to what the passage is all about) and to jot down key ideas or important points.

Stage 2 : Question

Now, allow students to contribute their responses by posing the following questions:

- what words, phrases or sentences give important information
- is there a central issue which is being emphasised
- how is the central issue or idea supported
- select supportive information and explain it.

Stage 3 : Prompt

Instruct students to read the first sentences of each paragraph and to decide whether these give important clues about the paragraph.

Skimming through a text may

- give an idea of its content
- help ascertain structure of the passage
- help ascertain tone of the writer
- give students an idea of how much they can guess by simply looking at some sentences of the text
- assist the slow reader to have some quick indication of what the passage is about.

Stage 4 : Evaluation

Ask students to read the passage again, keeping in mind the points made in stage three. Instruct them to compare their first reading of the passage with the second reading.

WRITING TECHNIQUES AND APPROACHES

Students must be made to realize that there is no single approach to writing. Furthermore, the students' attempt at a piece of writing will not be successful right away. It might take several efforts before a piece of writing may be acceptable.

It is important to examine the task carefully before attempting to write a response. Students can ask the following questions:

What is specifically required? - an explanation, an evaluation, a discussion or a comparison?

How do I write this?

How will I know that I have successfully responded to the task?

What kinds of issues, items, factors, concepts are involved?

Why is this piece of writing necessary?

Who will read it?

Week 4 : Writing Skill

TASK : IDENTIFYING EXAMINATION TERMINOLOGY

Stage 1 : Introduction

Ask students to think about the kinds of test, assignment and examination questions they are familiar with. Students can discuss these in pairs or in groups of three and to jot down the terminology used.

Stage 2 : Question

Ask students to contribute their efforts towards a class discussion. Tutor to list the contributions on an OHP transparency or on the chalkboard.

Stage 3 : Prompt

Instruct students to discuss in groups each term and to determine how to respond to it - Students to discuss the terms (eg. contrast, describe, relate) and to find synonyms etc.

Stage 4 : Evaluation

Ask for students responses to each term.

Week 5 : Writing Skill

TASK : RESPOND TO A CONTENT-RELATED EXAMINATION QUESTION

Stage 1 : Introduction

Select an examination question related to a section covered in the course earlier in the year. Instruct students to read and respond by identifying the key terms in the question.

Stage 2 : Question

Conduct a brief survey to determine what key terms were identified.

Ask students

- what synonyms can best replace the key terms?
- how they will respond to the key terms?
- whether their response to the key terms means that they have answered the question directly?

Stage 3 : Prompt

Instruct students to read the question, to distinguish between the most important term and the less important terms in the question in the question. Tell students that while the less important terms require a response, this response will be automatically reflected in the direct response to the main question.

Stage 4 : Evaluation

Ask students to compare their initial responses to the latter.

Week 6 : Writing skill

TASK : RESPOND TO AN EXAMINATION
QUESTION WITH THE AID OF A
MAP, TABLE, DIAGRAM

Stage 1 : Introduction

Select an examination question (course related) which requires the student to use, explain, describe or interpret a map, diagram or table. Ask students to discuss possible responses and to jot these down.

Stage 2 : Question

Question students on their possible responses.

Why did they choose to respond in this way?

What are they responding to?

Is the response clear to the reader?

Stage 3 : Prompt

Stage 4 : Evaluation

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